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Problematics of adaptation : A comparative study of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and its film adaptation *Dil Diya Dard Liya*.

Abstract:

Emily Bronte, one of the famous British novelist, has only left one novel, *Wuthering Heights* to the world. It has been numerously adapted into films since silent era. Within this list of adaptations, *Dil Diya Dard Liya* is also counted as a version of *Wuthering Heights*. Besides Heathcliff, the most researched character of this novel, Catherine is portrayed as Roopa in the film translation. Catherine, on one hand, is a complex character, frequently roaming between personalities, and, on the other, Roopa becomes a social victim, frequently hammered by the patriarchy. *Dil Diya Dard Liya* fails to contain the quiddity of Catherine's character into Roopa. In this paper, I study Bronte's Catherine, compared with the film's Catherine, Roopa. It ventures through the consciousness as well as the unconsciousness of Catherine studying simultaneously with Roopa's. Though the focus of this paper has been the representation of Catherine as Roopa, it also attempts to understand the failure in replicating the essence of Catherine's nature.

Key Words:

Adaptation, Wuthering Heights, Catherine, Roopa, Love, Character.

Introduction:

"A film adaptation is the transfer of a work or story, in whole or in part, to a feature film" (Film adaptation). Almost every work of English classic literature we study in higher studies has been adapted for film multiple times, in multiple languages and settings. For instance, there are more than two hundred screen adaptations of Sherlock Holmes, from William Gillette's 1916 silent film to BBC's 2010 version, starring Benedict Cumberbatch. The debate on cinematic adaptations of literary works was for many years dominated by the questions of fidelity to the source (Whelehan 3). In order to be seen as a good adaptation, a film has to capture what was considered the essence of the book. By 'essence', I mean the underlying spirit of the work. The focused film of this study, *Dil Diya Dard Liya*, an Indian adaptation of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, does not deliver properly to this notion of adaptation. As for this adaptation, it could please neither the critical eyes nor the Box Office. It was a flop in both ways. It is safe to assume that, in the process of adapting a literary work, without breaking the barrier of the typical Bollywood form of representation, it fails both to adapt the essence of the novel and to strictly hold on to the form. In this study, the concentrated area of examination is the character of Catherine Earnshaw and its Indian translation, Roopa. We shall discern in the discussion that Bronte's Catherine, being an embodiment of wild, ambitious, violent, and selfish forces, remains "completely consistent with the adolescent determination to have everything" until her premature death (Federico 27). On the other hand, the adapted doppelgänger, Roopa,

appears to be a victim of society and patriarchy. The "waif for twenty years" has been refuted, not by Lockwood but by Indian cinema, to become a fairy tale princess and to live happily ever after at the end (Bronte 69). *Wuthering Heights* is considered to be one of the greatest in the English canon, not only because of its narrative technique, plot construction, or critical reach but also for the depth the protagonists possess. Catherine, being the primary concern of this paper, is one such persona. Catherine's character is complex, which we shall study in four chapters containing different stages of her life, simultaneously with the life of Roopa.

Chapter 1

This chapter begins with Catherine's childhood. Through the narrative of Nelly Dean, the novel introduces Catherine as a wild, violent, ambitious, and confident little girl. Nelly describes young Catherine as "mischievous and wayward", that she was constantly talking, singing, or laughing, and used up everyone's patience at *Wuthering Heights* (78). Though the film introduces Roopa as a little older than Catherine, she exhibits nothing of Catherine's character traits. She seems a very sweet, simple girl who is respectful to the servants. While in the source, Catherine harasses Nelly terribly. The quality of being wild and ambitious is quite evident in Catherine, as "she was hardly six years old but she could ride any horse in the stable" (76). It is quite perceptible that, from childhood, Catherine thirsts for power. Her will to wield the power is embedded in her psyche. Nelly says, "In play, she liked exceedingly to act the little mistress; using her hands freely, and commanding her companions" (81). She also slaps Nelly in the process. Additionally, when

Mr. Earnshaw asks Catherine what he should bring her from his journey to Liverpool, Catherine asks for a horsewhip, which is, as Gilbert writes, "like a powerless younger daughter's yearning for power" (Gilbert 264) This tendency, to be in power and have control over everything and every action of others, travels throughout her life. The violent side of her psyche is also quite apparent when she spat on Heathcliff after knowing that he was the cause of her father's losing the gift. But eventually, they grow thick. It seems though, in Gilbert's words, "Catherine gets her whip... in the form of a 'gypsy brat'... 'it' (both whip and brat) functions just as she unconsciously have hoped it would, smashing her rival-brother's fiddle and making desirable third among the children in the family so as to insulate her from the pressure of her brother's domination" (Gilbert 264). This rebellious attitude is quite adamant throughout the text. This period of Catherine's age which acts as a founding stone to the utmost complexity of her character, is entirely omitted in the film. We shall see further also that the film has deliberately changed or erased several significant scenes, settings, decapitating Catherine's playful 'double' character and metamorphoses her into a 'perfect' Bollywood heroine. In the novel, Nelly describes Catherine's wildness, saying, "she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, as she defying us with her bold, saucy look... turning Joseph's religious causes into ridicule" (81). On the other side of this psychological unrest, Roopa willingly puts herself under the service of Shankar (Heathcliff of the film). She solaces him in his sadness, fixes his locket, and primarily she keeps herself busy complaining about her brother misbehaving against Shankar, to her father. From childhood, Roopa has subconsciously taken shelter under the male umbrella, in form of her father and sometimes Shankar.

Chapter 2

After the death of old Mr. Earnshaw, Hindley returns to Wuthering Heights and clutches the wand of power. Due to this change in supremacy, Catherine loses her freedom completely. Her savagery eventually fades away by the force of Hindley's tyranny. The most interesting thing here to catch is that she, of course, loses her freedom but only at Wuthering Heights. With Heathcliff, thus, she finds another way out to own freedom for themselves again. As Nelly says, "It was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day" (84). No doubt, however, due to the new man's accession to power, Catherine loses with her freedom, the shade of love and care. This is not something that she can recreate. She has only Heathcliff to reciprocate her love and mischief. And with such an excellent receiver as Heathcliff, "they both promised fair to grow up as rude as savages" (83). In *Dil Diya Dard Liya*, after the death of old Thakur, as the medium of patriarchy altered, Roopa, similar to Catherine, loses her freedom, and with it, her father's love and care. Yet it is curious to note that, while Catherine chooses to break out of the subversion only to be free and wilder, Roopa lives under it, accepting the hierarchy. We witness a scene where young Roopa and Shankar are playing, smiling; Ramesh (Hindley of the film) calls for Roopa. Strangely, in reply to the call, she runs away, leaving the company of Shankar, fearing her brother's reaction to finding her with Shankar (*Dil Diya Dard Liya* 11.40 - 12.05). Thus she submits completely to the subversion of patriarchy. She does not stay with Heathcliff and faces her brother's call simply. This creates a wide gap

between the characters of Roopa and Catherine. Continuing the scene, the camera angle shifts to Roopa's running feet, displaying the Bollywood cliché of the transition of the protagonist/s into an adult. Then, with the older Roopa now, we once again observe the previous scene repeating itself, where she runs out of Shankar's company because of Ramesh's arrival (Dil Diya Dard Liya 13.21 - 13.40). This displays that unlike Catherine, she is stuck in the swamp of voicelessness, finding her free will out of reach. In other words, while Catherine breaks free out of the cage of subversion, Roopa accepts her caged position. Catherine plots revenge against the dominion, rejecting it completely; while Roopa regrets her father's death. She says to her brother, "If only father were alive, it would have been better" (Dil Diya Dard Liya 19.09). In the novel, from the voice of Heathcliff, we receive reflections of Catherine's strong will, and that is from her own actions. He describes that when Linton's dog bites on Catherine's leg, "she did not yell out—no! She would have scorned to do it, if she had been spitted on the horns of a mad cow... she was sick, not from fear... but from pain" (86). There is no denying the fact that the film has made Bronte's Catherine more weaker and cowardly. It failed in translating the essence of Catherine. Further, we shall see that the gap between the versions only widens.

Chapter 3

This stage of Catherine's life, after her first entrance into Thrushcross Grange, is the deciding period for her future and also of her character. In the novel,

the day Catherine and Heathcliff escape

"to have a ramble at liberty, and getting a glimpse of the Grange lights", they discover the 'idiotic' behaviour of the Linton kids (84). Heathcliff comments, "we laughed outright at the petted things; we did despise them" (85). Curious still to notice that, Catherine is now laughing seeing them and a few weeks later becomes them. After her stay of five weeks at Thrushcross Grange, when she returns we see, with injured ankle, her manners have improved evidently. Nelly describes her return by saying, "instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person" (88). It must not be misunderstood that this is her reformed self, rather this can be described as a coat of personality,

which is, as Catherine says herself, "used to Edgar and Isabella Linton" (88).

On returning to Wuthering Heights, as soon as she sees Heathcliff, she "flew to embrace him; she bestowed seven or eight kisses on his cheek within the second, and then stopped, and drawing back, burst into a laugh, exclaiming, 'Why, how very black and cross you look'" (89)! With this act, we for the first time observe the shuttle transition between her two selves. She does not hug Nelly, as "she was all flour", but when she gets a glimpse of Heathcliff, her true self gets to the surface only to be suppressed by her newer consciousness, as she suddenly realises the 'dirt' Heathcliff is with (88).

Heathcliff, who was only a few weeks ago ready to shatter Linton's "great glass panes to a million fragments" to save Catherine, barely recognises her (87). With Heathcliff's exoticizing Catherine, she is unrecognisable to herself too, as to her, she is Heathcliff. In the presence of Lintons, she tries not to behave like Heathcliff, but this gentleness does not exist in the Heights when

there are no Lintons around. She travels very swiftly between personalities. But her torment commences at the junction of these two selves. She is often torn between her two worlds, which pull her in opposite directions; she struggles to decide which nature to follow. Like one time, when Hindley is not at home, Catherine invites Edgar over to Heights. Getting the opportunity to be alone with Catherine, Heathcliff wants to spend time with her too. But he soon finds out about the guest coming over. This results in an argument between Heathcliff and Catherine; though he leaves as soon as Edgar arrives. Catherine is now disturbed, as she has just confronted her other self, which she did not wish to. And her annoyance reaches its peak when Nelly refuses to leave her and Edgar alone. This triggers her psychological imbalance and she fails to suppress her true nature, despite being in the presence of Edgar. She pinches Nelly, then denies the act completely since Edgar is present; but she could not shackle herself for long. She proceeds to slap Nelly and shakes her nephew Hareton. When Edward tries to stop Catherine, she slaps him as well. We get a clear glimpse of Catherine's double character as well as her being torn between them. This possession of her doubleness is what defines the character of Catherine. In *Dil Diya Dard Liya*, this primary characteristic identification is completely omitted. In the process of making a Bollywood heroine, the film fails to adapt the essence of her character. The film does not allow the whole event of Catherine's stay at Grange, after bitten by the dog, to be in the plot. This costs the construction of Roopa's double character. For the typical Bollywood style, this has to be made like this, so "she can express her passion for [only] the hero without becoming a vamp and without losing the audience's sympathy" (Seijo 361). Heathcliff runs away in the novel, leaving Catherine in torment.

Unlike in the novel, for Roopa, her torment reaches its peak after Shankar's supposed death. The awareness of her lover's death breaks Roopa from the inside. Roopa's suffering is evident when, in reply to Mala's (Isabella of the film) question, "How would you live, if you give yourself that much pain thinking about the impossibility of Shankar's return?", she says, "Isn't it an impossibility that I am living after these" (Dil Diya Dard Liya 01.03.28)? Her torment is far away from ceasing. Her inner turmoil only gets stormier with the criticism of society. After Shankar's supposed death, Ramesh and Satish (Edgar of the film), representatives of the two households' patriarchal forces, decide to keep Roopa at Satish's house without her consent. "Society keeps her in the charge of her degenerate brother or requires her to define her status in Satish / Edgar's house: 'a woman can only live in a house as a sister, wife or daughter-in-law. Which one are you?' gossipmongers accuse her.... Roopa is booed at the New Year's party and openly accused of being a 'fallen woman' because of her brother's behavior (Ramesh is drunk and shouts at his lover Tara for flirting)" (Seijo 364). In the novel, in spite of her inner conflict and dilemma, finally Catherine herself decides to marry Edgar. But in the film, within the period of her stay at Satish's house, Roopa is tortured by Satish's continuous marriage proposal against her will. Roopa is not ambitious like Catherine; to her, marriage is not a medium to become rich or to "be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood" (109). Roopa reflects, "marriage is a bond between two souls, not a whole life's misery" (Dil Diya Dard Liya 01.20.10). In spite of the clear distinction between their characters, they share the same source of their torment, i.e., marriage. Catherine suffers because of her decision to marry Edgar, and Roopa suffers because of her refusal to marry Satish. Satish politely threatens her to marry him by asking

her to keep the dignity of her late father's name and also to stop people's gossip about her stay at his house. He even forcefully puts a wedding ring on Roopa's finger, portraying the force of male dominion. Unlike Catherine, the actions that put Roopa to the climax of her torment are all against her will. She is portrayed as a doll in the hands of males. It is safe to conclude that Catherine has been translated into a sympathy-evoking, powerless, weak persona who, like the fairy tale princess, is held captive by the demon of patriarchy, only to be rescued by the prince at the end. There is no denying the fact that Roopa could live up to becoming an ideal Bollywood heroine, but obviously not an adapted version of Bronte's Catherine.

Chapter 4

This last chapter captures the period, beginning with Heathcliff and Shankar's return; it speaks of the beginning of Catherine and Roopa's end. In the novel, Heathcliff's mysterious reappearance makes Catherine initially very happy. Her suppressed will to own both men appeared to be fulfilled in her adolescent psyche, but only to be shattered again. His return "intensifies rather than cures her symptoms. For his return does not in any way suggest healing of the wound of femaleness that was inflicted at puberty. Instead, it signals the beginning of 'madness', a sort of feverish infection of the wound" (Gilbert 279). She is locked into a social system that, says Gilbert and Gubar, denies her autonomy, and thus, Heathcliff's return represents the return of her true self's desire without the rebirth of her former power (280). Clearly enough, at this stage of Catherine's life, we witness her character being torn between her desire and her powerlessness. She wishes to "escape from 'the

started prison' of her body, her marriage, her self, her life" (Gilbert 279). She asks Nelly to open the window, which refers, as Gilbert says, "back to that moment three years earlier when she had chosen... to inflict on herself the imprisonment and starvation" (279). Catherine's unsuccessful wish to own both men breaks her mentally. After his fight with Heathcliff, Edgar asks Catherine, "Will you give up Heathcliff hereafter, or will you give up me" (141)? In reply, she starts dashing her head against the arm of the sofa and grinds her teeth, almost crushing them into splinters. Evidently, this psychological imbalance of Catherine only occurs at the junction of her two personalities. Whenever she is forced to face and choose one between them, her psychotic turmoil begins, which results in her violent actions. The first time she was pushed like this, she pinched Nelly and slapped Edgar. After the return of Heathcliff, this period of Catherine's life brings her into a continuous confrontation with reality and feelings of powerlessness. This is why, in her madness, she reaches her childhood fantasy. The child of Wuthering Heights returns to her psyche because she yearns for her lost power and freedom. Her cry for returning to Wuthering Heights remains with her in death. Once a free, wild, savage girl, ends up a ghost, a waif, who only wishes to return to her Heaven. In complete opposition, in the film, Roopa does not want to return to her childhood home. The reason could be her psychic conditioning to live under the male shadow, as her own house no longer belongs to Ramesh but to a female, or as branded in the film, a 'whore' named Tara. At this point, for Roopa, there is no home that she can claim as her own. One is owned by a female, and the other, where she is forced to live, is owned by Satish. It is interesting to note that she chooses to live under the patriarchal dominance of Satish, not breaking out of the subversion and living with a fellow female. She

does so, thinking that Satish shields her from social criticism. She says to Shankar, defending his acquisition of betrayal, that after Shankar was gone, she was left alone, the society accused her of being unchaste, and she had no choice but to accept Satish. After Shankar's return as the king of some unknown region, he gets to know about Roopa's engagement. He loses all hope with the refusal of Roopa to marry him, going against society. Feeling betrayed, he embarks on a journey to take revenge. Initially, though, this causes a lot of suffering to Roopa, but in the end, she is rescued from the polite patriarchal tyrant Satish and marries her prince Shankar to live happily ever after.

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